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Kondapur

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Preface

The following brief account of the antiquarian remains at Kondapur may be of some interest to the many visitors to this important site. The illustrations have been published before in various Research Journals and Reports: but they have been included in this book, in view of the constant demand for photographs of many of these objects.

P. SREENIVASACHAR
Director

KONDAPUR

Location

Kondapur is situated (Lat. 17°-33′, Long. 78°-1′) in the Kalabgur Taluk of the Medak District at a distance of 43 miles West-North-West of Hyderabad a little way off the main road from Hyderabad to Bidar—a cart track branching off the main road a little beyond the 38th mile from Hyderabad.

Topography

Kondapur as well as Tirpol—another village close by—are conspicuous on account of several mounds close by, only one of which, about half a mile south of the village of Kondapur, has been taken up for preliminary excavations.[1] The mound is adjacent to a small stream feeding a small tank near by.[2]

Mound

The mound excavated is at an altitude of about 1788 ft. above sea level and about 20 to 30 feet above the surrounding ground. The Western portion of this mound was 10 to 12 ft. higher than the Eastern part and was the first to be selected for excavations. The very limited excavations conducted so far have given convincing proof of the fact that Kondapur must have been a very important Andhra centre.

Structures

Religious and ordinary structures have both come to light revealing an architecture not very imposing and grand, nor even beautiful, but quite efficient and skilful even if somewhat plain.

1. The Archaeological Department of the Hyderabad State started excavations at this site in A. D. 1940 : and work of a couple of seasons in two or three areas has proved this to be a very promising site.
2. Dr. G. Yazdani surmises that the streamlet was dammed perhaps by the Kakatiyan kings "(who were very fond of building tanks") for storing the waters in a reservoir. This is quite probable since the dykes at Pakhal, Ramappa and Lakhnaram are the achievements of the Kakatiyas and prove their great interest in irrigation.

Construction was mostly of brick and mortar—mortar of clay obtained from the beds of tanks and bricks of various shapes and sizes, the dimensions ranging according to the size of the building. The bricks were made of coarse granular local soil which is decayed laterite with smooth sides. In the enclosure wall the size of the bricks is 22″ x 12″ x 2½″ and in small rooms 17″ x 8″ x 2½″ (sometimes 3″ thick). At corners of some houses are used square bricks (20″ square) which are 2½″ to 3″ in thickness. For a circular structure such as a Supta or the apsidal end of a Chaitya wedge-shaped bricks are used.

Construction

Traces of a few buildings are seen from the limited excavations conducted so far: but the considerable damage done by vandals after the desertion of the site has rendered the task of reconstruction difficult, particularly in the Northern parts of the mound.

Buildings

In the South-west are seen a dagoba and a few cells round it. The dagoba is a small one, about 19 feet in diameter, with a rubble core encased in brick. There are 6 cells in a row towards the North, one cell in the West and an uncertain number in the East, besides a passage 5 ft. 2 inches wide between the fourth and the fifth cell in the North. The cells in the North are square rooms 10 ft. x 10 ft. approximately. Traces of a narrow brick pavement in front of the cells might be a sort of open stylobate or the floor of a possible verandah constructed in wood, now completely perished.

The alignment of the cells in the East is irregular: and since these are not at right angles to the row of six cells in the North and since, further, there is only one cell in the West it is doubtful whether the whole structure is really a Vihara as conjectured by some scholars with cells all round and a dagoba in the centre.

The two small Chaitya halls to the South of these

remind one of the general plan of Monastery II situated on the Northern end [Plate V (d)] of Naharallabodu Hill in Nagarjunakonda, (Madras State), with two small Chaitya halls on either side of the entrance to the square courtyard of the monastery with cells all round the courtyard. But the similarity is not so apparent in plan and structure. The Chaityas have the usual apsidal ends with the rubble foundations of a dagoba still traceable in one of them.[1]

The Western end of the mound shows a Stupa 15 ft. in diameter in the middle of a courtyard paved with brick and concrete, and traces of some cells and a small Chaitya Hall. The Stupa has a projection towards the South obviously a landing for steps.

Underground chambers

There are six underground chambers (three of them double chambers with a partition wall in the centre) ranging in depth from 5 ft. to 25 ft. These are built of neat courses of brick laid in mud with the bottom paved with bricks laid flat or with small stones fixed evenly to the ground. Since these chambers contained comparatively valuable articles like coins with their mounds, seals, terracotta figurines, beads, and ornaments of gold and other materials it may be presumed that these are depositories or underground chambers for safe custody of valuables.[2]

The discovery, of 2 furnaces has led to considerable speculation as to the nature of a few structures near by; and it has been suggested that there was an industrialist area with metallurgists shops etc. The discovery of coins and their moulds accounts for the presence of these furnaces and there is very little to suggest that the traces of the paved

1. There is one special feature which defeats an attempt to reconstruct a coherent plan in these structures. The foundations of the walls of these two Chaityas overlap and "it appears that one of them, probably that on the eastern side was built after the other."
2. In Deccan and South India underground cells for storing valuables and grain is a common feature and may be still seen in almost every house in rural parts. They are generally called Patara or Kanazamu in Telugu. In Kondapur these were first

rectangular rooms with brick foundations and with floor paved with brick bats or rubble are "metallurgist's shops." [1] Similar uncertainity exists in reconstructing the form of the superstructure in these buildings and in assuming that the tiles discovered had been used in covering the roofs of these buildings.

A broken piece of vertical pillar of lime stone with a design of half lotus led to speculation whether this was an *Urdhvapata* of a railing round a stupa similar to the railings round the stupas at Amravati and Nagarjunakonda. But the inadequacy of the material found and the difference in the type of structures found (especially the stupas) preclude any definite conclusion on this point.

Coins

A gold coin of the Roman pontiff Augustus[2] (37 B.C.-14 A. D.), about a dozen silver coins, 50 copper and 100 potin coins and a large number of lead coins (totalling 1835 coins) suggest a comparatively late date for this place among the Andhra antiquities and confirm the evidence of other finds that no date before Christ can possibly be suggested. The moulds of coins, some of them identified as "moulds of punch-marked coins," are interesting :[3]

Date of early coins

Dr. Rama Rao states "The characters of the legend, resemble very closely those of the earliest known inscriptions of the Satavahana

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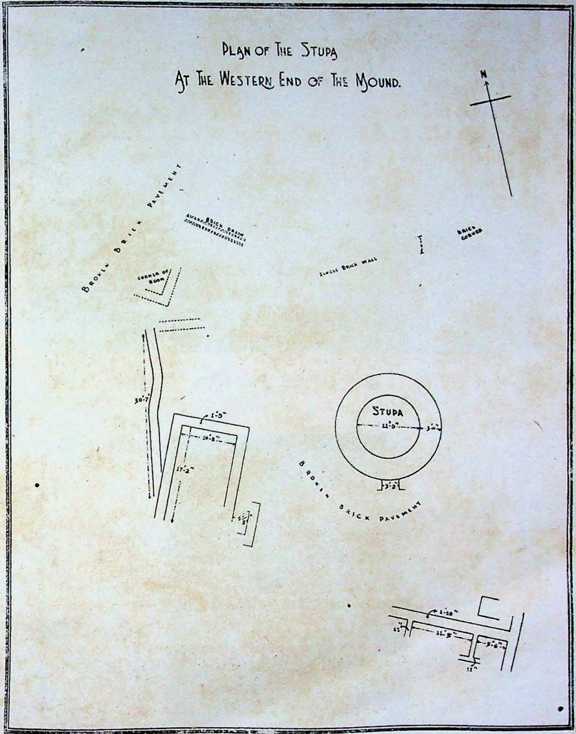
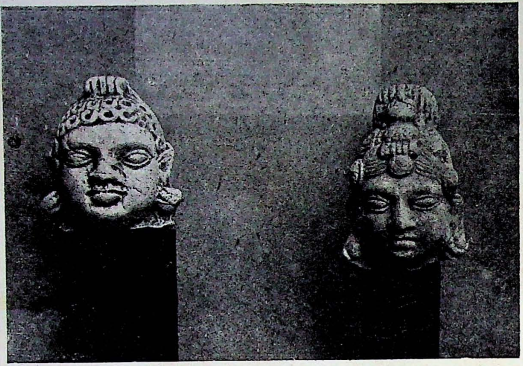
mistaken for wells and soak-pits for refuse.

1. It may be noted that no help can be derived from the evidence of stratigraphy in these excavations and it is not even certain whether the furnaces are as early as the other structures here.
2. Roman gold coins belonging to about the first Century A.D. have been found in Karimnagar District. A few, have been assigned to the Mahisa dynasty and in particular to one Mana, a saka king. One unique coin—an oval piece with the device of an elephant with its trunk hanging down has been attributed to king Satavahana, founder of the Satavahana dynasty.
3. There is no basis however to "presume that during the Andhra period these moulds were made from the original Coins and then they were used for casting coins." Nor is it so "obvious that the Andhras used imitations of punch-marked coins for this silver currency." It is needless to add that no one can seriously suggest 1000 B. C. as the date for these punch-marked coins.



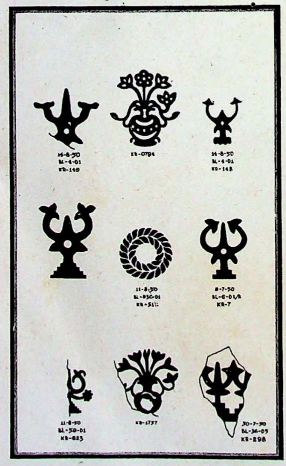
KONDAPUR — SITE OF EXCAVATIONS

PLATE II



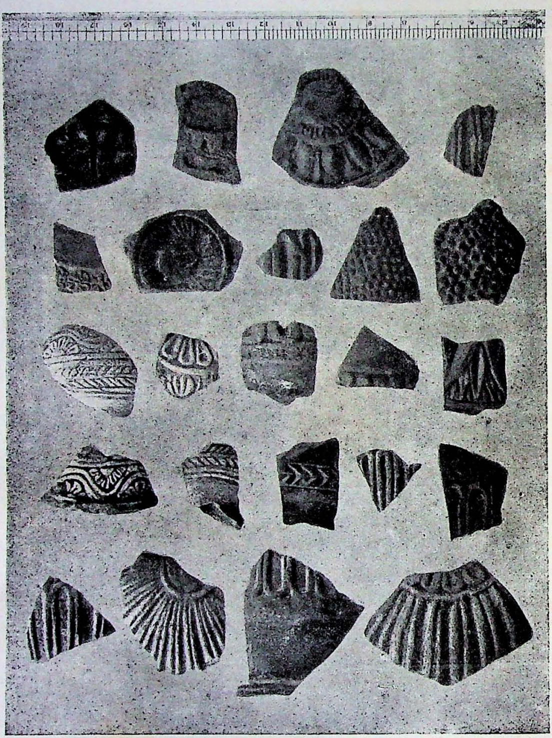
TERRACOTTA FIGURINES

TERRACOTTA FIGURINE



SYMBOLS AND OTHER MARKS ON POTTERY

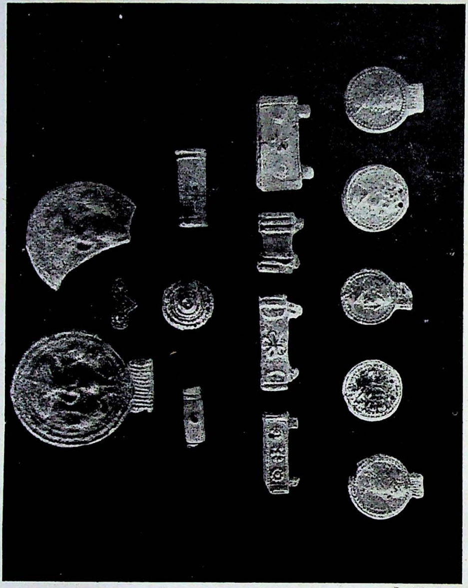
TERRACOTTA FIGURINE



POTTERY

PENDANTS AND OTHER ORNAMENTS

PLATE VI



PENDANTS AND OTHER ORNAMENTS

LEAD COINS OF
ANDHRA DYNASTY

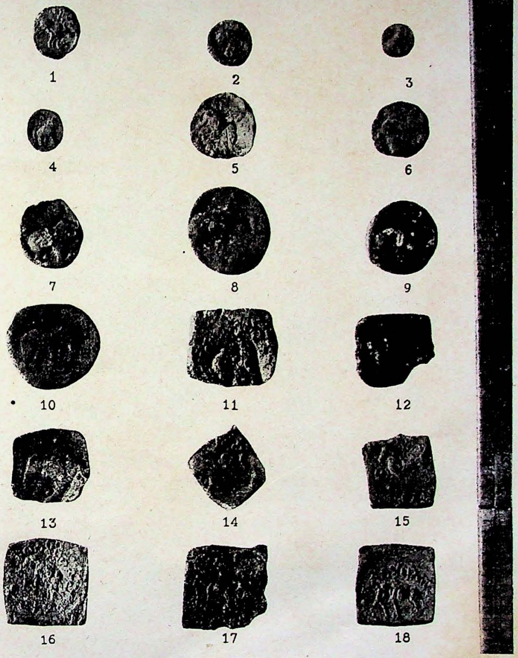
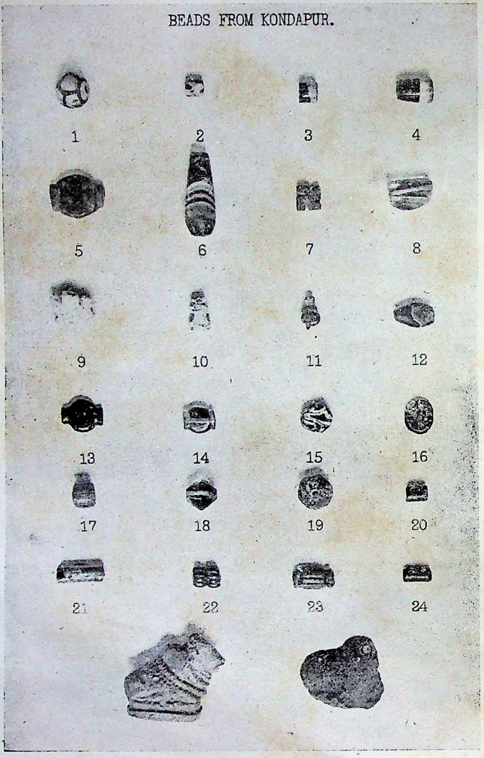


PLATE VIII



BEADS

family and may be assigned to the third quarter of the third century B. C. Since the first king of the family, hitherto known has the name Satavahana and since his successor mentions Satavahana as the name of his family it may be concluded that this king Satavahana was the founder and first member of the celebrated Satavahana dynasty. I assign him to 235-220 B. C."[1] Arguing in the same strain but with less emphasis Prof. V. V. Mirashi states "The legend on the present coin has not come out in full as its blank was smaller than the die . . the characters are like those on the copper coins, though not so neatly shaped. The copper portions of *sa, da* and *va* have not come out on the coin. *d* faces left: *v* has a round lower limb: the vertical of *h* is shortened, but its right limb is still horizantal. These characters leave no doubt that the coin belongs to about the same age as the Nanaghat inscriptions. Satavahana, who issued it, must therefore be identified with the founder of the so-called Andhra dynasty, as shown in my previous article on the copper coin."[2]

While a detailed discussion can only be possible in a separate article it is necessary to refer to the main difficulties in accepting the date of III Century B. C., to the above coin, and, by implication, to the antiquities of Kondapur. Dr. Mirashi himself seems to anticipate one difficulty when he "raises the question whether the Ujjain symbol really originated in Ujjain. Even if we do not accept Rapson's suggestion that its use on the coins of this dynasty signified the conquest of Ujjain by Satakarni who thereafter performed an Asvamedha it is by no means granted that "the symbol occurs on the coins of Satavahana who preceded Satakarni by at least three generations" nor even "that the symbol was current in the Deccan long before the time of Satakarni." The Ujjain symbol will

1. Numismatic Series No. 2: A New Coin of king Satavahana from Kondapur by Dr. M. Rama Rao.
2. Numismatic Series No. 4: A lead coin of Satavahana by Prof. V.V. Mirashi.

have to be explained in a much more convincing manner before this coin can be assigned to the 2nd Century B. C., or even earlier.

The second difficulty is the date of the Nanaghat inscriptions themselves which is not above question. Palaeography is too flexible a basis to serve as a guide when not reinforced by the concrete support of dates or other data : and at least one noted epigraphist has argued that the characters of all the early records of the Andhra Satavahanas (referring to Simukha and his immediate successors Krishna and Satakarni) found at Nanaghat, Nasik, Sanchi and Hathigumpha "are more developed and therefore later than those of the Besnager epigraph of Heliodorus which cannot be much earlier than the end of second Century B.C." The chronology of the Satavahanas is a vexed problem with few definite landmarks and the latest authoritative pronouncement on it has it that "the overthrow of the Kanva king Suvarman by the Andhra (Satavahana) Simuka may be assigned to a date 137+112+45=294 years after c 324 B.C. *i.e.*, about 330 B.C. Simuka, who reigned for twenty three years according to the Puranas, may be supposed to have ruled about the third quarter of the first Century B.C., and to have extirpated the Kanvas about the close of his career. This date is supported by the palaeography of the Nanaghat Nasik, Sanchi and Hathigumpha inscriptions. . . ."

In view of these considerations, even if we grant hypothetically that this coin is that of an early Satavahana ruler it by no means follows that its date is as early as the 2nd or the 3rd Century B.C. It might therefore be stated here that numismatic evidence affords no reliable basis for assigning a date before Christ to Kondapur and its antiquities.

Pottery

The pottery discovered at Kondapur consist of plain saucers and chatties of ordinary domestic use, "ornamented pots, urns, incense burners and vases exhibiting potter's skill of a high order." The sizes vary from the small ones with 18″

to 20″ in circumference and 7″ in height to the large ones with 9 ft. in circumference and 3 ft. in height.[1] The symbols on this pottery are Triratna, lotus design (in some cases full blown lotus), and Dharma-chakra. Geometric designs of a check pattern and floral devices are common in this pottery. "Flutings below the neck of the vessels running towards the base, where this terminate in a small medallion" is seen in some pots. Some of the pottery is extremely thin and delicate and has a red colour with lustrous polish. Possibly a variety of clay highly levigated and reddish in colour was used for making pottery of such fine texture. The common pots were made of clay with a great deal of sand; and this pottery turned pink or light red during the course of firing. Most of the pottery is coated with a slip of a red colour (red oxide) more or less dark[2] and ranging considerably in the thickness of the coating.

Some pottery has been made of kaolin possibly imported from a distance for making terracotta figurines or other special objects. A good slip is invariably seen on this pottery some of which is painted.

The recovery of four specimens of rouletted pottery leads us to the problem of co-ordinating the data scientifically obtained with that already available elsewhere, especially from excavations conducted by Wheeler and his assistants. There is no mistaking the four pieces found in Kondapur, in particular the circular broken dish (KR. 1319) with a flat base of about 10″ in diameter. The wall 2″ in height is curvilinear with a diameter of about 12″ in the middle and at the top. The maximum thickness is about ·2″. It has been made of extremely close grained clay and is of high brown colour outside with a jet black

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1. One jar KR. 3097 recovered from site H. Block 2 at a depth of 6" from the surface is about 4 ft. in height, a narrow base, a thick rim and a circumference of 9 ft. at the bulged portion.
2. In a few cases it is a chocolate tint possibly because a little manganese was mixed for making the jar water proof.

and well tarnished paint inside. The feature of particular interest is the presence of two concentric rings of roulettes in the middle at a distance of about 1.7″ and 2.6″ respectively from the centre each having a width of .3″ and .6″.

While the texture, type and design of the pottery found so far gives no clue to assign a date earlier than Christ the inscribed and rivetted pottery so carefully examined by Dr. N. P. Chakravarti definitely assigns them to the 2nd Century A.D. The skill in boring holes in the broken pieces probably with the help of a sharp iron drill, the care with which "the joints were placed on both sides of the fragments and nails carefully rivetted" is another proof confirming a late date of about 2nd Century A. D. to the earliest antiquities found at Kondapur.

Personal Ornaments

Broken bits of Bangles of terracotta, shell, ivory, copper and glass, with embossed and incised designs on the clay and ivory bangles and amulets and a sort of crescent shaped objects of terracotta and of shell have been found in large numbers. Terracotta Beads and necklaces especially of baked clay are in abundance as also copper ear rings and finger rings. Baked clay imitations of Roman coins (of First Century A.D.) with holes at the top are strung together for use as a neck-ornament.

Miscellaneous Objects: smithy

Iron Implements and weapons such as sickles, forks, hoes, knives, spear heads, chisels and nails (some of them corroded badly through the effect of moisture in the ferrous soils of Kondapur, so typical of parts of Deccan) and furnaces already alluded to and large earthen water basins (possibly for cooling the metal) found in such large numbers suggests considerable skill and experience in smithy work.

Ivory

Skill in ivory work is testified to by one particular ivory piece recovered from Kondapur with a beautiful scene carved on it. An elephant with two men seated on it and a child being lifted up, together with a lady nearby carried forcibly in arms by

a man assisted by another holding a stout red has suggested an abduction scene. The expression on the face of each one of these tiny figures is exquisite.

Terracotta figurines

Hollow figurines of Kaolin made in moulds (in two or more parts joined and fired) have been found in considerable quantities. Some of them show traces of green, red and yellow paint on them and in just a few cases even the finger prints are still visible.

A second variety of terracotta figurines, solid and made of soft clay mixed with sand are usually found with a coat of light red slip applied before firing.

One of the terracotta figurines representing a figure with conventional ringlets of hair with a flat nose, thick lips and oval face show typical features of an indigenous non-Aryan ethnic type. Another with a jewellery band round the forehead, heavy ear-rings and a mass of hair on the crown of the head and the ornamental plaits falling on the nape of the neck is only one of several more, all of which show the particular care bestowed by the sculptor in the treatment of coiffure. Even in figurines meant to be humorous with dumpy noses and irregular features there is long hair turned up at the end.

Some of these figures have been identified with various degrees of certainty. One of them is probably a Yaksha (Kubera?) and another, a female with a child on her knee, might be Hariti with a fan or an incense burner in her hand. A mutilated figure is sought to be identified as the Mother Goddess but the best figure is identified as a Bodhisattva, an identification which requires much consideration.

The skill of the artist is seen from the attempt to infuse the figures with an expression of "internal calm and repose worthy of a votary of the Buddhist faith." Even a smile on the lips is "indicative of inner joy." The meditative mood is quite common adding a touch of other worldliness to the ethereal beauty of the refined features of these artistic creations.

Beads

About 2000 beads made of lapis lazuli, carnelian, onyx, jade, rock-crystal, amethyst, glass, shell and clay of a great variety of shapes[1] and sizes have been found at Kondapur. In ancient times the Deccan was noted for its bead industry as testified to by the great number of beads found at Paithan and Maski besides Kondapur. There are some gold beads which show enamel work. "The use of a white paste probably of kaolin, which is available in the Deccan at several places is noticeable on some beads of carnelian." Dr. Dikshit has made a special study of 3000 selected Beads from Kondapur: the results of his study being incorporated in a separate work.

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1. The shapes include round, discoid, oval with prolongated ends on two sides, barrel-shaped, triangular and also in the form of a dagger.